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The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba

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The

First Canadian Woman in the Northwest

Or the Story of Marie Anne Gaboury, Wife of John Baptiste Lajimoniere, Who Arrived in the Northwest in 1807, and Died at St. Boniface at the Age of 96 Years

BY

M. L'ABBE G. DUGAST

Translated by Miss J. M. Morice

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THE FIRST CANADIAN WOMAN IN THE NORTHWEST

The Historical Society of Manitoba at its meeting on Dec. 12th, 1901, authorized the printing of the following paper:

Marie Anne Gaboury, the daughter of Marie Tessier and Charles Gaboury, was born at Maskinongé, in the diocese of Three Rivers, on the 6th of November, 1782, and was baptised the same day by the Rev. M. Rinfret, who was in charge of the parish. One of her uncles, M. Gaboury, took orders and lived at Saint Sulpice for a long time.

For eleven years young Marie Anne Gaboury lived a quiet and peaceful life serving at the priest's house, without the least suspicion that the years which were to follow would bring such incredible changes in her existence.

During the winter of 1806, a young Canadian, named J. Bte. Lajimoniere, who had just spent five years in the North West came down to Canada to visit his family residing at Maskinongé.

The aged still recall the sensation produced in the parish by the arrival of a voyageur from this far off country. All the world came to see him, to speak with him, and above all to listen to him: he had many wonderful tales to recount! What marvelous facts fell from his lips, they were not always strictly true but what did that matter; they were interesting, what more could one desire?

It is not surprising to learn that Marie Anne Gaboury, then twenty-five years of age, after much persuasion obtained leave from the old housekeeper to be present at the evening entertainments, of which the young voyageur was the hero, given in Maskinongé during the winter of 1807. It was probably at one of these reunions that she became acquainted with the young hunter and allowed herself to be charmed with his tales.

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During his stay in Canada M. Lajimoniere had not communicated to anyone his intention of returning to the North West, and in the parish all his friends thought that his five years' adventures amid the savages were sufficient to take away his taste for travelling, and that henceforth he would settle down to the pleasant life of a farmer in the midst of his family.

Marie Anne Gaboury was herself convinced of this when M. Jean Baptiste Lajimoniere asked her hand in marriage. Before consenting she consulted her family and the curé, at whose house she had dwelt for eleven years.

As M. Lajimoniere came of a respectable Maskinongé family, Marie Anne Gaboury's parents made no objection to give him their daughter's hand. The date of the marriage was therefore set for the 21st of April.

Up to this time all went well. Nevertheless the spring brought with it a longing to travel which nothing could eradicate.. Towards the first days of May M. Lajimoniere made known to his wife that he intended to depart immediately upon a second voyage to the North West. This news was a sharp blow to Madame Lajimoniere; however she did not allow herself to be too much depressed by it, she believed that by force of circumstances and prayers she would finally turn her husband from his purpose, which he had kept a secret before their marriage: but when aften having set forth the strongest and most convincing reasons, she saw that his resolution was firm and that he would go at any cost, she felt her position very keenly. It was too late to impose conditions, there was but the one alternative, either she must allow her husband to go by himself without the hope of seeing him again for many long years, perhaps never, or accompany him into a barbarous country to share during the remainder of her days his fatigues, discomforts and dangers.

The missionaries had not then penetrated that land to carry into it the light of faith, and the tribes in these immense territories were still living in darkness; the aspect of things temporal was not much more smiling, she would be obliged to follow a nomadic existence like the Indians during the years to come; she could easily see that civilization would not soon reach this part of America. However, after having examined every point well, without making a flattering picture of it, M. Vinet, her pastor, counselled Madame Lajimoniere that if in spite of all considerations she felt herself

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courageous and strong enough to go to the North West she should follow her husband rather than let him depart alone.

From Maskinongé M. Lajimoniere, with his wife, went to Lachine, near Montreal, to await the departure of the canoes by which they intended to take their passage.

Each spring as soon as the rivers were navigable canoes loaded with merchandise for fur trading, and provisions for the employees at the forts of the Trading Companies, started *en route* for the North. These canoes were manned by voyageurs, chiefly Canadians engaged throughout the towns and country for the service of the powerful North-West Trading Company.

Madame Lajimoniere had no companion of her own sex with her. She embarked in the canoe, with her husband, to whom alone she trusted for protection, and began from the first day her apprenticeship to the mode of life which she was henceforth to lead for more than twelve years, for, with the exception of a few times when she was lodged with her children in the forts belonging to the Company, we are told that until 1818 she made her home in a tent.

During the voyage Madame Lajimoniere did not have to handle the oar or to carry heavy burdens on her shoulders like the men, nevertheless she found it very fatiguing to spend the whole day at the bottom of a canoe without being able to change her position, exposed to the rays of the sun, the wind or the rain, then when night came to sleep on the shore of a lake or river with no bed but the hard ground, facts which are much more poetical in a book than in reality.

After leaving Lachine the canoes went to Saint Anne, a place about two miles distant from the farthest point of the Island of Montreal. It was here that their first encampment was made and the guides considered that the voyage only really commenced after leaving this place. The next day they bade farewell to Canada, launching the canoes after the arrival of all their men at The Lake of the Two Mountains. These men were engaged to serve from Lachine to Fort William, at the head of Lake Superior. Each canoe, rowed by eighteen men, was under a master and required eight men to carry it.. All the merchandise and provisions which formed the cargo of a canoe were put up in bales weighing from eighty to ninety pounds. From Lachine to Lake Huron they were obliged to make at least twenty-six portages. This will give one an idea of the fatigues and difficulties which the

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voyage offered. In spite of the difficulties of such a journey the entrance to Lake Superior at the head of Sault Ste. Marie was reached without accident. This lake, as every one knows, is a large inland sea which to-day is navigated like the ocean by vessels of great tonnage; it is subject to frequent tempests and when this great sheet of water is stirred by violent winds navigation becomes dangerous even for a large ship.

This year the canoes encountered two terrible storms, during one of which a part of the expedition perished in the waves. Madame Lajimoniere many years afterwards told her children of the mortal fear which she had felt on this occasion, and with what fervour she had prayed not to go in the frail vessel.

After a month of travelling the voyageurs arrived at Fort William, which is a little more than half way to Red River, but it is the easier half of the route. The passage from Thunder Bay to Lake Winnipeg was made sometimes in canoes, sometimes on land. The portages were more frequent than between Lake Huron and Montreal. The canoes used by the voyageurs for this part of the route were much smaller than the first because the country across which they had to travel presented more obstacles.

From Fort William the route was followed without accident and the canoes arrived at Lake Winnipeg towards the first week in July, and soon ascended the Red River.

M. and Madame Lajimoniere embarked in canoes for Pembina as they intended to pass the winter at that post.

Before his trip to Maskinongé M. Lajimoniere had lived there for four years and had left behind him an Indian woman who had lived with him during his stay at the post. We can well believe what a grief this would be to his wife.

The canoes, going up the river, stopped at Fort Gibraltar, which was built at the mouth of the Assiniboine, where they left their supplies. This post with that of the Hudson's Bay Company,* built a mile lower down, were the only buildings on the Red River between Lake Winnipeg and Pembina.

After four or five days' paddling up the river against the winding current they arrived at Pembina. M. Lajimoniere pitched his tent in the neighborhood of the Fort to be in readiness for the hunting season in the autumn.

There were five or six Canadians hunters living near the Fort who had married Indian women. The lives of these men did not differ from that of the Indians; they lived in wig-

* It is doubtful whether there was a H. B. C. fort here at this time—*Ed.*

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wams made of skin, encamping near the fort during the summer and passing the winters on the prairies engaged in hunting. These Indian wives of the Canadians were the only women that Madame Lajimoniere had to associate with, and they could not speak French so their conversations had to be carried on by signs.

J. B. Lajimoniere, we have already said, had, like many of the traders of the time, taken a squaw for a wife during the five years which he had passed at Pembina. He had left this woman a year before his voyage to Canada and she remained near the fort with her relations and other Indians; and when after two years' absence she saw him, whom she regarded as her husband, return with a wife she was jealous and resolved to avenge her injuries upon Madame Lajimoniere.

It is commonly believed that these Indians, who are heathens, have certain potions which they prepare and give to their enemies in order to bewitch them. Invocation is made to their Manitou over the preparation to aid them in bringing evil upon their enemies, and many persons who have lived amongst the Indians for a long time assure us that these beverages, which are poisonous, succeed in producing the desired effect.

The squaw formed the design of poisoning Madame Lajimoniere. She strove to hide her jealousy by a show of friendliness and under the pretext of rendering assistance came every day to visit Madame Lajimoniere in her lodge.

Madame Lajimoniere, ignorant of the relations which had existed between her husband and this woman, had no suspicion of any evil intention hidden beneath her kindness and was by no means upon her guard.

Happily the squaw confided her secret to the wife of one of the Canadians who lived near the fort. This woman hastened to acquaint Madame Lajimoniere with the danger which menaced her, advising her at the same time to leave the Fort with her husband and not return for some time.

M. Lajimoniere, who knew something of the jealousy and thirst for vengeance which the Indian nurses in his heart, struck his tent immediately and left to pass the winter at the head of the Pembina River.

This place was called the Grand Camp and in the autumn nearly all the hunters met there, as it was the most favorable place for the buffalo.

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Even much later in 1812 when the first Scotch settlers arrived in Red River they were obliged to go there during three or four winters to procure the necessaries of life as there were no other means of subsistence in the country.

M. and Madame Lajimoniere did not remain at Grand Camp till the spring, but near the beginning of January they returned to the post at Pembina. The King's birthday found them lodged in a house at the Fort and it was there, on the 6th of January, that her first child was born. This day usually so happy and consoling to a mother was a sad and sorrowful one for Madame Lajimoniere. She had to christen her infant herself, being the only person capable of doing it.

As it was a girl she called it Reine because it was born on the King's birthday.

Madame Lajimoniere remained at the Company's Fort till the month of May. Her husband spent nearly all his time in hunting. This was the only way in which the trappers could procure nourishment, though it is true that at that epoch game was very abundant and a hunter who was at all active was never obliged to fast.

When the beautiful spring days had come to set the rivers and lakes free from their icy beds M. Lajimoniere announced to his wife that he intended leaving Pembina to go up the Saskatchewan in company with three Canadians who had spent the winter at Pembina. The names of these men were Chalifou, Belgrade and Paquin, and all three were married to Indian women of the Cree tribe.

Having procured two canoes large enough to carry their wives and some provisions for the voyage they commenced their journey towards the end of May, 1807.

The canoes quietly descended the Red River to the entrance of Lake Winnipeg then they skirted the lake shore till they reached the mouth of the great Saskatchewan River. Madame Lajimoniere's baggage was reduced to the smallest possible amount, her child and provisions for three or four days in advance being all she could take with her. She carried the infant in a moss bag, after the manner of the Indian women—it was more convenient to adopt the usage of the country on this point—nevertheless we might remark that although Madame Lajimoniere lived for seventy years in this country she never herself adopted any of the Indian habits and kept as much as possible to the dress of her native land.

After some weeks the canoes arrived at Cumberland

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House where the voyageurs intended to stay for a short time. A great number of Indians were gathered around the fort treating with the Company. The news had travelled in advance of the party that a white woman from France was to arrive with them and would very soon be at Cumberland House. This excited their curiosity greatly; they had a thousand questions to ask as to whether she was different from the Indian women; if she was good or wicked, and if she would be able to talk to them.

Belgrade, who had reached the Fort ahead of his companions, told these savages that the French woman was good but that she was very learned in medicines and that if any one offended her she had the power to cause their death by merely looking at them. In a few minutes the whole camp had been told of this wonderful peculiarity and they all determined to do their best to gain the French woman's favorable regard. Speeches and presents were prepared and when Madame Lajimoniere arrived at the camp they paid her great homage. Every one tried to shew themselves at their best before her. "Have pity on us," they said, "we only wish to look at you," and they took an unspeakable pleasure in gazing at her. Madame Lajimoniere was far from being without charms, her features were regular and her skin was very white, the savages who had never seen any person fairer than their own dark companions thought her marvellously beautiful and shewed an extraordinary respect to her.

After a week's rest the travellers continued their journey towards the Fort of the Prairies. One night when they were late in camping they had tied their canoes to the willows on the band and had lighted a large fire near the water's edge. where they found some fallen trees. After supper the men were chatting together around a pile of wood, Belgrade, Chalifou, Paquin and Lajimoniere were sitting between the river and some dry timber which they had gathered together, and a man named Bouvier, who had joined them en route, sat alone on the other side of the fire. At a little distance Madame Lajimoniere and the other women were preparing the tents for the night when all at once Bouvier gave a cry of distress and called to his companions to help him.

At the first shout each hunter seized his gun and prepared to defend himself against the attack of an enemy; they hurried to the other side of the ditch to see what was the matter with Bouvier and what he was struggling with. They had

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no idea that a wild animal would come near the fire to attack a man even under cover of night for fire usually has the effect of frightening wild beasts. However almost before the four hunters knew what had happened they saw their unfortunate companion dragged into the woods by a bear followed by her two cubs. She held Bouvier in her claws and struck him savagely on the face to stun him. As soon as she saw the four men in pursuit she redoubled her fury against her prey, tearing his face with her claws. M. Lajimoniere, who was an intrepid hunter, bated her with the butt end of his gun to make her let go her hold as he dared not shoot for fear of killing the man while trying to save him, but Bouvier who felt himself being choked cried with all his strength, "Shoot; I would rather be shot than eaten alive."

M. Lajimoniere pulled the trigger as close to the bear as possible, wounding her mortally. She let go Bouvier and before her strength was exhausted made a wild attack upon M. Lajimoniere, who expected this and as his gun had only one barrel loaded he ran towards the canoe where he had a second gun fully charged. He had hardly seized it before the bear reached the shore and tried to climb into the canoe but fearing no longer to wound his friend M. Lajinmoniere aimed full at her breast and this time she was killed instantly.

As soon as the bear was no longer to be feared Madame Lajimoniere, who had been trembling with fear during the tumult, went to raise the unfortunate Bouvier, who was covered with wounds and nearly dead. The bear had torn the skin from his face with her nails from the rots of his hair to the lower part of his chin. His eyes and nose were gone—in fact his features were indiscernible—but he was not mortally injured. His wounds were dressed as well as the circumstances would permit and thus crippled he was carried to the Fort of the Prairies, Madame Lajimoniere taking care of him all through the journey. In time his wounds were successfully healed but he was blind and infirm to the end of his life. He dwelt at the Fort of the Prairies for many years, but when the first missionaries reached Red River in 1818 he persuaded his friends to send him to St. Boniface to meet the priests and ended his days in Mr. Provencher's house. He employed his time during the last years of his life in making crosses and crucifixes blind as he was, but he never made any *chefs d'oeuvre*.

To return to our travellers, they resumed their journey

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the following day and arrived at the Fort of the Prairies by the end of August. M. Lajimoniere had spent a winter there two years previous and being acquainted with the factor, Mr. Bird, obtained a place for himself and his wife in the Fort for the autumn and winter.

The Fort of the Prairies, which is now called Edmonton, was the most important fort in the West at that time. Being the great reunion point for the Indians, all the tribes met there, Blackfeet, Assiniboines, Sarcees, Blood and Crees. When these different bands were assembled around the Fort they were often the cause of great uneasiness to the factor and his employees who regarded them with very serious fears. More than one battle took place in which blood was freely spilt and more than one combatant met his death. The men in charge of the Fort had need of invincible courage and muscles of steel to rule these savages who ackonwledged no sovereignty but that enforced by courage and strength. They must be ruled by fear just as we tame wild animals by exerting that power.

At one time the factor of a Fort on the Saskatchewan was left alone at the post with only one servant, all the other employees being absent, some on the prairies and others conveying the " pieces " to a neighboring fort. A band of Blackfeet who were camped a short distance from the pallisade resolved under cover of the night to make the factor open the gates of the Fort and provide them with whiskey and tobacco. Knowing that the factor had only one man with him they thought it would be very easy to intimidate him by their numbers and never doubted that they would get everything they asked for. They gathered around the principal gate of the Fort and knocked for admittance. The servant aroused by the noise went to see what was wanted, he opened a little shutter through which he could see who was outside without danger and perceiving the band of Indians at such a late hour of the night he at once comprehended that the affair might be serious. The factor was already in bed. The man told the Indians to wait a moment and that he would inform his master of their demands and bring the keys of the gate.

On each side of the gateway there was a tower supplied with a good cannon loaded with balls—they had only to fire them to make the Indians dance. The factor said to his man: " Go into the tower, take the balls out of the cannon, leaving only a charge of powder and I will do the same on this side

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and when I give the word, " Fire ! " do so. All this time the Indians waited patiently at the gate believing that they would bring the keys to let them in. When the factor had mounted the cannon from which the balls had been drawn he cried out to his man " Fire ! " The two guns went off at the same moment, the Indians who had never heard a salute fired lost their wits, they were so startled that they bounded about three feet in the air and obeying the impulse of fear rushed in the direction of their camp without looking either to the right or to the left. The factor glad and triumphant put his head out of the opening and cried to them, " Stop ! Stop ! I have another shot yet." They appeared to be quite satisfied with the one experiment as they did not return.

But these affairs did not always end so happily.

On another occasion one of the neighboring forts was the scene of a frightful occurrence. The employees had left the fort one morning in the canoes to take provisions to some places higher up at another trading post and the Commissioner, named Kite, was left alone. The canoes were conducted by four Canadians, Montour, Millet, Morin and St. Germain. A French half breed, named Tourangeau, followed the men in a small canoe. During the day the Indians who were camped on the other side of the river opposite the fort sent a young Indian to the shop to buy some powder. When the Commissioner had given him what he asked for he patted him on the head in a friendly manner never thinking that the lad could take umbrage at this familiar demonstration. As soon as the youth returned to the camp he became ill and died before evening. Before drawing his last breath he told his parents that the Commissioner of the Fort had caused his illness, that he had cast an evil spell over him that morning by laying his hand on his head. The Indians are childishly credulous and they immediately decided that the Commissioner was neither more nor less than a Sorcerer and that it was necessary to put an end to him as soon as possible. The occasion was favorable; against one man the struggle would be easy and the pillage without danger. Next morning at break of day the warriors crossed the river in great numbers and gaining entrance into the shop flung themselves upon the Commissioner with their knives and stabbed him to death. Then they robbed the fort. By this time the Canadians who had started the evening before were returning without the least suspicion of danger. An old French half breed woman

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who lived with the tribe knowing that they would be massacred as soon as they set foot on shore tried to save their lives without endangering her own; she went to a small island two or three miles above the fort to stop the voyageurs on their way home, but unfortunately it was too late to see her and she could not succeed in making them hear her when they passed. As soon as they reached the fort the Indians killed them and took flight.

Tourangeau the half breed was behind the Canadians and only arrived at the fort the next day. He was surprised on landing not to see anyone about the shore. He went directly towards the gate to see what was the cause of the silence which reigned everywhere. The first object that met his eyes was the corpse of one of his companions who had been stabbed with a knife. By the time he reached the centre of the enclosure he found the others and at last the body of the Commissioner already decomposed. As there was not a living creature left he could get no explanation of this terrible butchery. The thought came to him that perhaps the Indians were in ambush waiting for him and that he would share the same fate as his friends. Even at that moment they might be aiming at him Wild with fear he ran to his canoe, pushed it free and paddled with all his strength in the direction of the next post. He proposed to paddle all night so as to put the Indians off the pursuit. Towards ten or eleven in the evening he saw on the shore a large fire banked around with earth, but the distance was so great that it was impossible to distinguish whether they were friends or foes. When he came opposite to the camp he spoke a word in French in order to find out if they were not employees from a neighboring fort and great was his joy when they answered in the same language. They were the Company's men carrying provisions to some distant posts. Tourangeau hastened to cross the river and describe to them the frightful scene that he had witnessed.

Such were the dangers which the voyageurs had to run at this time in the service of their Company in the immense solitudes of the West. This life offered but little attraction to a woman accustomed to the quiet life of the Canadian country.

Madame Lajimoniere wintered for four consecutive years at the Fort of the Prairies, arriving at that post in the autumn of 1808 she only returned to Red River in the spring of 1811. During the winters her husband was absent the greater part

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of the time visiting his snares and getting furs. He was not engaged in the service of the Company but hunted on his own account and like the Indians brought his skins to trade at the Fort. In the spring when the fur season was over he left the Fort to hunt buffalo and his wife accompanied him, mounted on horseback she would ride for a whole day over the prairies and through the woods. When her husband found a favorable spot for the chase the tents would be pitched and they would stay there for some time.

In the summer of 1808 M. Lajimoniere was camping on the border of a little river with his companion, Belgrade, whose wife also was with them on the prairie. One day it was necessary to visit some snares at a distance and the two women were left alone in the tent. All at once a band of Crees passed within sight of their tent and seeing this little isolated lodge around which they could not discern any person the Indians were curious to visit it. As soon as Mrs. Belgrade saw them approaching she caught up Madame Lajimoniere's child in her arms and crept into the woods on her knees, believing that the Indians had come to massacre them.

They had surrounded the lodge and the chief of the band dismounted to see if this was a hiding place of some enemy.

Madame Lajimoniere was not yet accustomed to these visits and firmly believed that her last hour had come. The Indian chief presented himself at the door of the tent and was not a little surprised to find a young woman—he had never seen a white woman—on her knees. In fact Madame Lajimoniere was on her knees in the centre of the tent saying her chaplet and praying to the Virgin to protect her.

A Canadian named Batoche Letendre, who had married into the tribe and been adopted by them, was with the savages. He also approached the tent and upon recognizing her as a Canadian he hastened to set her mind at rest by telling her that she had nothing to fear.

"I have lived in their midst a long time," said he, "and I am certain they will do you no harm."

Madame Lajimoniere was a little reassured by these words, but alone on the prairie surrounded by a band of savage warriors in search of an enemy to scalp the hours seemed desperately long. Towards the end of the day her husband returned and was taken aback to find so many visitors around the camp. Some were calmly spread on the grass smoking their pipes, while others were attending to the horses at a little distance.

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At first he feared that the women had been murdered and the same fate awaited him. As he could not see her about the tent he went near enough to make her hear him and called: "Marie Ann, are you alive?" "Yes," said she, "I am alive but I am dying of fright." Mr. Lajimoniere was acquainted with the tribe and could speak their language fluently, advancing boldly, therefore, after making and receiving a sign of the hand which signified friendship, he begged them to camp at a little distance as the women were tired and ill. The Indians after assuring him that they were friendly and wished him no ill, consented to spend the night a little further away.

When they had gone Mrs. Belgrade returned with the child from the woods, where she had spent the day in hiding and the three were very happy to be relieved from their fears.

The day following J. B. Lajimoniere and his companions struck thir camp and started on the return trip to the Fort. It was then the month of August. Madame Lajimoniere followed her husband on horseback, carrying her child with her in a moss bag which hung from one side of the saddle, while on the other side she carried a bag of provisions which by its weight counterbalanced the child and kept it from falling.

Madame Lajimoniere was a good horsewoman and could ride nearly all day without resting when she was returning to take up winter quarters at the Fort. They often spent the summers at long distances from the Fort, and this year they had camped for some time in the neighborhood of Battle River. Two or three days after their adventure with the Indians they found themselves on a large prairie frequented by innumerable herds of buffalo and suddenly a band of these animals crossed their path. The presence of a herd of buffalo produces an astonishing effect on the horses. Without being urged by his rider a horse will often start off in pursuit of them with a fervor that it is impossible to check. A hunter thus carried into the midst of these animals, rushing in a mad race, runs the very greatest danger.

Unfortunately on this occasion Madame Lajimoniere was mounted on a horse accustomed to this mode of procedure and as soon as he caught sight of the animals, without a thought of his burden, he took the bit in his teeth and galloped after the herd. Embarrassed by the two bags which hung on either side of the horse, in one of which was her child, the poor woman every instant expected that she would be

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thrown to the earth and trampled under foot by the buffalo. She commended herself to God and clung with all her strength to the horse's mane. She could not calculate how long the race lasted, she was only certain that it was horribly long. When her husband by wheeling and cutting across the horse's path succeeded in stopping his flight she was on the point of succumbing to fear and fatigue. This was about three o'clock in the afternoon. They pitched their tents on a rising piece of ground near some trees and it was there, some hours after the race that Madame Lajimoniere gave birth to her second child, who they nicknamed Laprairie because he was born in the middle of the prairie.

The season was not very far advanced and the voyageurs arrived in good time and without accident at the Fort of the Prairies where they remained for the autumn and winter.

In the spring Madame Lajimoniere had a strange adventure at this same Fort with a squaw of the Blackfoot tribe. One day she took a kettle to bring some water from the river and her two children were left alone in the house. The distance from the Fort to the river was not very great, but the banks were extremely high, and it took quite ten minutes to go down and return again.

Her youngest child was a pretty little baby with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair, and he attracted a good deal of attention from the squaws.

A Blackfoot woman who often came into the Fort noticed him and cast envious eyes on him. In spite of her affection for her own progeny she thought him much more charming than the little Blackfoot babies and resolved to steal him when an opportunity offered. This morning she profited by Madame Lajimoniere's absence to seize the baby and run away with him. She put him on her back in a sort of hood formed by the blanket which she wore and hastened out of the Fort to join her people who were leaving the camp immediately. Madame Lajimoniere saw the squaw hurrying away and carrying a child, when she was climbing the bank with the kettle of water, but she never supposed for an instant that it was her child.

At the gate of the Fort she met Mr. Bird, the Factor, who asked her why she had left her children alone when the Blackfoot were near. "There is one escaping with a child," said he, "it might very well be yours that she has stolen. Hurry! And see if the children are safe." It only took an

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instant to see that the baby had disappeared and that without doubt the squaw had carried it off. Without asking help from anyone, urged on by a mother's love, she flew in pursuit of the squaw, who redoubled her effort to escape. She had almost reached her people when Madame Lajimoniere seized her by the shoulder. "Give me my child," said she, stopping her, "Give me my child that you have stolen." The squaw did not understand the words, but she knew what the gesture meant though she made believe not to understand and pretended to be very much astonished, as thieves do when accused. However Madame Lajimoniere opened the hood that the woman had carefully closed and there was her little child smiling quite happily. When the squaw saw that she was discovered she pretended that she was only carrying him away to play with him and made no resistance to restoring him. She could hardly claim him for hers, his complexion would at once betray him, so she let Madame Lajimoniere take the child and for the present renounced her design of bringing up a little Canadian and making him into a Blackfoot.

In the spring of 1809 in spite of the sorrowful adventures of the preceding summer Madame Lajmoniere again went with her husband to the prairies. She was beginning to be inured to hardships and the Indians frightened her less than they did at first. How true it is that we become accustomed to all things and in the end even attached to our misery ! But as one lives one learns and Madame Lajimoniere had not yet reached the end of her trials.

Towards the end of June, the longest days of summer, M. Lajimoniere being on the lookout for game, camped one evening on the shore of a little lake where they passed the night. The next day when he went to bring in the horses they had disappeared. Had they been stolen by the Indians, or had they gone a long distance in search of pasture ? No one knew. Their tracks would have to be followed without knowing where they would end and his wife would have to be left alone in the tent with the children.

He did not return that day and Madame Lajimoniere was obliged to pass the night alone. The situation was not very re-assuring. If she were attacked by wild beasts or by Indians she could not expect help from any quarter.

The next day about noon a band of savages of the Sarcee tribe, armed with arrows and knives and their faces painted

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as if they were on the war path surrounded Madame Lajimoniere's tent. These Indians were on the march to avenge the death of some of their warriors who had been massacred on the previous day by the Crees.

M. Lajimoniere's companions, Belgrade, Chalifou, Caplette and Letendre, who had married women of the Cree tribe, were out on the plain trading with the Indians and the Sarcees who hated the Crees finding that the wives of these Canadians were of that tribe had already cruelly massacred them and the men only escaped death by prompt flight to the fort.

It was these same savages, thirsting still for the blood of their enemies who now surrounded Madame Lajimoniere in her lodge.

They knew by her complexion that she could have nothing in common with their foes and that they should not treat her as an enemy. The Chief asked by signs if she had a husband and where he was. She tried to make him understand that he was looking for their horses and that he was a long time in returning. They made signs that they would wait for him and would not leave without speaking to him. They hobbled their horses and spread themselves on the grass to wait. Madame Lajimoniere was very anxious but she put a good face on the matter and determined to treat them as friends.

She had some fresh meat in the tent with which she prepared a feast for them. The kettle was filled and put on to boil and while waiting she sacrificed some tobacco which her husband had in reserve for grand occasions.

When the pot boiled she took it from the fire and cutting the meat in pieces served it to the savages as they sat on the grass. The best way to propitiate an Indian is to feed him well. The Sarcees were delighted with their reception and tried their best to prove to Madame Lajimoniere that they meant her no harm.

Towards five o'clock in the afternoon her husband arrived with the horses and he was not very well pleased to find these visitors at the camp. After assuring himself that his wife, except that she was frightened, had suffered no ill he told the Indians that he was going away to camp in another place.

"No," said they, "you shall not leave until five of our people who have been sent to the Fort return. If they suffer any harm from the people of the Fort you shall answer for them."

As it was impossible to escape M. Lajimoniere told them

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that his wife was tired and ill and that she wanted to be alone and that the next day they would return to them. The savages consented to allow him to pass the night with his wife and children a few miles distant near a small thicket of trees. This was in June when the days are longest and the nights clear and bright. The hunter and his wife proceeded to the place where they had told the Indians they intended to camp and in fact stopped there a little while to take refeshment, but as soon as they thought the Indians were sleeping and that it would be safe to leave without being seen they mounted and took the road to the Fort. It was pretty certain that the Indians, angry at being duped, would follow in pursuit so they rode all night and all next day without stopping to rest, fearing at each moment to see the enraged enemy behind them.

At last after travelling for five days they reached the banks of the Saskatchewan opposite the Fort of the Prairie, and called for someone from the Fort to take them across the river. It was quite time, for scarcely had they touched the other bank when they saw the Sarcees in the distance in pursuit of them. The Canadians, Belgrade, Chalifou and Paquin, whose wives and children, as we have already said, had been massacred, were at the Fort. M. Lajimoniere and his wife had hardly entered the enclosure in safety when the Indians crossed the river and presenting themselves at the gate of the Fort demanded that the Canadians should be given up to them. The Trader and all the employees of the post endeavored to pacify them, but it was only by the help of presents that they were finally persuaded to retire without bloodshed.

Madame Lajimoniere did not return to the prairie that summer. Their life was full of danger and without much profit. She longed to persuade her husband to give up this adventurous existence and to see him settled in one of the forts.

In the spring of 1810 she returned to the prairies with him and it was during this trip that her third child was born. She had nicknamed her second child Laprairie because he was born in the midst of a great prairie, so she called this one, whowas a girl, Cypress because she came into the world on the Cypress Mountains.

Her second child, who was two years old at this time and who had been almost stolen by the Blackfoot squaw when he was six months old, seemed to attract the envious glances of

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all the savages, for this summer a new attempt was made by them to get possesssion of him. This time they did not try to steal him, but they proposed to trade horses for him. One day when Madame Lajimoniere was with her husband in the tent the Assiniboines arrived with some horses and the Chief dismounted to talk to Madame Lajimoniere. She did not understand Indian, but the Chief represented that they desired to have the boy and taking the rope which held the finest horse he put it in her hand making signs that he would give it in exchange for the child. As one can well imagine Madame Lajimoniere refused his offer and made signs that she would never consent to such a trade. The Indians believing that she was not content with one horse drew up a second and put the cord of this one also in her hand as he had done with the first. She said to her husband, "Tell him that I will not sell my child that he would have to tear my heart out before I would part with him."

"Very well!" said the Indian, "take the horses and one of my children." "No!" said she, "You can never make me consent to such a trade," then taking her child in her arms she began to cry.

The Indian apparently was touched by her tears, for he ceased to insist on the change and went on his way with his people and horses.

This was the last adventure in the Saskatchewan district. Towards the end of the summer she reached the Fort of the Prairies to pass the winter and in the spring of 1811 her husband consented to return to Red River where trials of another kind awaited her.

II.

In 1811 the news reached M. Lajimoniere that Lord Selkirk would establish a colony on the banks of the Red River and that the families who were to form the nucleus of this settlement would leave England that spring, therefore instead of returning to the prairies he launched his canoe and took the route for Lake Winnipeg. Madame Lajimoniere did not grieve at leaving the Fort of the Prairies. By returning to Red River she was approaching 400 leagues nearer Canada and she cheated herself into the belief that she was coming to a civilized country. Moreover the time could not be far

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off when the missionaries would penetrate into this country bringing the benefits of true civilization with them.

M. Lajimoniere's intention was to settle permanently in the colony as soon as that place offered a means of subsistence to its inhabitants.

Very late in the summer they arrived at the site of the present City of Winnipeg, but they did not stop long at this post. The colonists had left Scotland but could not reach Red River that year. The vessel which brought them to York arrived so late that the settlers were obliged to pass the winter on the shores of the Hudson Bay. They did not leave there until June in 1812, and after enduring much misery and excessive fatigue, from the effects of which many of them died, they arrived at length in Red River about the beginning of September.

M. Lajimoniere spent the winter of 1811-12 at Pembina where he had wintered with his wife in 1807. His family had been increased by two children during his stay in the Saskatchewan district. The eldest child, named Reine, it will be remembered, was born at Pembina in 1807, the two others, a boy and a girl were born on the prairies, Jean Baptiste towards the middle of August, 1808, and Josette in the course of the summer of 1810.

Madame Lajimoniere had a fourth child at Pembina in the winter of 1811-12, who was christened Benjamin. This son was not born in the midst of adventures; unlike Jean Baptiste no attempt was made either to steal or buy him and his mother was allowed to rest in peace. The winter passed without any event of importance to mark it. M. Lajimoniere was only there waiting for the arrival of the colonists upon which it was his intention to repair at once to Fort Douglas. When the river was open in the spring he went down with his wife to Fort Gibraltar, situated at the mouth of the Assiniboine, and ascended this river for about twelve miles stopping at a place which is now called St. Charles.

Up to the present time Madame Lajimoniere had not had a very agreeable life, as one will easily understand, but at least during the winters she had dwelt in the Company's forts and there she had not felt herself completely isolated. For three years from 1812 to 1815 she was alone with her children lodged in a little hut a dozen miles from any habitation. M. Lajimoniere had built this little hut of rough boards without floors or windows and installed himself and family in it.

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To exist at that time in Red River one had to hunt, and life or death were at the point of the gun. This man had to feed and clothe his wife and four children so he lived much the same kind of life on the Assiniboine as he had done in the Saskatchewan district, only his wife was left at home with her children and he was absent sometimes for months at a time, and on these occasions there was nothing to distract her in her lonliness but the care of her children in a house which was hardly large enough for herself alone.

In the autumn of 1815 M. Lajimoniere announced that he would be away for a longer time than usual. But before telling of his journey and of the hardships that his wife had to endure in his absence we must speak of the events which had taken place in Red River between the Trading Companies.

The Great North-West Company founded in 1784 by a society of Montreal merchants had always been, since its incorporation, antagonistic to the Hudson's Bay Company, its rival in the fur trade of the far North.

Whenever one Company built a fort the other hastened to erect another beside it and each tried to secure the most skins. Towards the years 1806 and 1807 the shares of the Hudson's Bay Company were very far inferior to those of the North-West Company which at that time was at the height of its success.* At this epoch a Scotch nobleman, Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, came to Montreal to enquire into the state of the commerce of the two Companies. On returning to England he bought almost half the shares in the Hudson's Bay Company, which had fallen as low as 60 after having been at 250 per cent.

The capital of the Hudson's Bay Company was £100,000 sterling. Lord Selkirk bought shares to the amount of £40,000. One can judge what effect this would have upon the Company.

Encouraged by the success of his first speculations he formed the design of monopolizing the exclusive trade of all the territories of the North West for the Hudson's Bay Company. He knew after the explanations that he had received at Montral that a Company, having no other to compete with it, would realize a colossal fortune by the fur trade.

For this reason he bought shares in the Company and a large tract of land on the banks of the Red River and announced in Europe that he intended to found a Colony there.

* This was in 1803.—*Ed.*

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Lord Selkirk's aim in founding this settlement on the Red River was not simply to form an agricultural establishment but* also to ensure on the part of the new colonists assistance against the North-West Trading Company to enable him to ruin its commerce.

He pretended that the Hudson's Bay Company under virtue of the charter which had been granted to it by Charles II. in 1670 had the exclusive right of fishing and hunting not only on the shores of the Hudson Bay but all over the North West from the Rocky Mountains up to the frozen seas at the far North.

The rivalry between these two Companies became serious upon the arrival of the first colony in 1812 and continued to rage until 1821 at which time they were united under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The French Canadians and half breeds usually embraced the cause of the North-West Company while the Scotch and English as well as some of the Indian tribes were devoted to the Hudson's Bay Company.

M. Lajimoniere had never been in the service of either Company. He hunted on his own account and sold his furs as often to the one as to the other. However after his stay in the Saskatchewan where he lived in the Hudson's Bay Company's forts he always shewed himself in favor of this last named Company.

In March, 1815, two of the North-West Company's forts were taken by the Hudson's Bay Company and the provisions, merchandise and furs contained in them were taken to Fort Douglas. The Traders and employees were held prisoners and all their papers confiscated. The couriers bringing letters from Canada for the Company were stopped and their letters intercepted.

The agents of the North-West Company in order to circumvent their enemies stopped the Hudson's Bay Company's couriers and held them prisoners in their forts. It was therefore very difficult to send letters from Red River to Montreal. The distance to be travelled through the woods was 600 miles and to avoid passing the different posts, placed like steps of a ladder along the route it was necessary to take great detours, cut across swamps, cross lakes and rivers passing by any inhabited parts of the country without being seen.

J. Bte. Lajimoniere was engaged by the Governor of Fort

* This is the Nor'Wester view, but there is no evidence supporting it.—*Ed.*

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Douglas to carry letters to Lord Selkirk, who was then in Montreal. In 1815 a few days before Hallowe'en he requested him to come to the fort and asked if he could go with letters to Lord Selkirk in Montreal without being stopped on the way. M. Lajimoniere, accustomed to a wild life, could defy the cleverest Indian in finding his way on a long voyage; he had a very quick eye which served him in finding his way better than the best compass.

M. Lajimoniere replied that he could go alone to Montreal and that he would make every effort to put the letters confided to his care into Lord Selkirk's hands.

The season was already far advanced and the intrepid messenger would need to hasten if he was not to be stopped by the snow. He made his preparations to depart on All Saints' Day. If he arrived without accident he could return in the course of the winter, but he must find a place to shelter his family from want during his absence. The trader told him to bring his wife to the Fort where she would be lodged and fed till his return from Montreal. Madame Lajimoniere therefore left the hut on the bank of the Assiniboine to become an inmate of Fort Douglas.

We will not follow her husband through all the stages of his voyage, which was long and rough. It is only necessary to say that leaving Red River on the 1st of November, 1815, he did not return until December, 1816.

He was fortunate enough to reach Montreal without falling into the hands of the agents of the North-West Company and to give the letters which he carried to Lord Selkirk himself. He was not as lucky on his return. Perhaps not having important papers on his person he was less careful, anyway in passing Fort William he was made prisoner and lived at this post until the arrival of the De Meuron Force, in the autumn of 1816, sent up to Red River by Lord Selkirk to retake Fort Douglas.

The forts taken by the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company were Gibraltar, at the mouth of the Assiniboine, and Pembina, situated at the American boundary. They have long since disappepared. On the evening of the 17th of March the men at Fort Douglas conducted by Mr. Colin Robertson surprised Fort Gibraltar. The Fort was plundered and dismantled and the employees as well as the officer in charge were taken to Fort Douglas. Some days afterwards the same employees surprised the other fort at Pembina and treated it

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in the same manner. At Fort Qu'Appelle a third attempt was made to seize a fort, but it miscarried. War was now openly declared and the Hudson's Bay Company seemed determined to drive its rival out of the country with an armed hand.

The North-West Company received all their supplies of provisions and merchants for trading by canoes from Montreal every spring. These goods were transported to the mouth of the Assiniboine at Fort Gibraltar, which was a great distributing point, and from there the forts along the Assiniboine were supplied. The principal aim of the Hudson's Bay Company in seizing Fort Gibraltar was to break the means of communication between the canoes coming from Montreal and the employees who came from Fort Qu'Appelle to meet them.

After their forts were taken the North-West Company's people came to the conclusion that they would require to descend in a body in the spring if they desired to force the passage and meet the voyageurs from Fort William with any good results. It was not their intention to fight if they could gain a passage without doing so. They were influenced by self-preservation one of the first principles of humanity, if they did not succeed in transporting the food and provisions to their people in the West many would in all probability die of starvation.

The employees of Fort Douglas who expected a troop of armed Metis from Qu'Appelle were on guard day and night. The news having been brought to Governor Semple by two Indians that the North-West Company were assembling all their men to retake the forts.

Madame Lajimoniere, who was at Fort Douglas with her children, was not a little disturbed as she knew that she would be in great danger if the Fort was attacked by the North-West Company.

About four o'clock in the afternoon of the 19th of June a sentinel at Fort Douglas brought word to Governor Semple that a number of people on horseback were passing in view of the Fort but at a safe distance. This band of horsemen did not appear to be animated by hostile intentions as they had already passed Fort Douglas and were directing their course down the river. Governor Semple suspected that they were Company's people and that their aim was to meet the canoes lower down the river in order to carry off the supplies and as this was what he wished to prevent, orders were immediately given to the men who were armed to start in pur-

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suit and if possible cut off their passage and oblige them to turn back. When the Metis saw the Governor and his men approaching they sent an envoy to ask what was required and why they were being followed. As the deputation came up, either through malice or imprudence a gun went off and one of the half breeds who was with them was killed. This was the signal for battle. The mounted Metis accustomed to shoot from horseback while hunting the buffalo charged the enemy and in a very few moments twenty of them lay dead, Governor Semple being among the first who fell. The Hudson's Bay Company's employees upon hearing of this disaster, the news of which was almost immediately brought to the Fort, believed that the Metis would attack the post and that they would all be massacred.

A friendly Indian named Peguis came to Madame Lajimoniere in the evening and said, "Listen Frenchwoman! Not later than to-morrow the Metis will take the Fort, but I will save you and your children, leave this place to-night and come to my tent on the other side of the river where you can live in safety." Trembling with fear Madame Lajimoniere hastened with her children and what clothing she could carry to the bank of the river where the Indian and his squaw waited for her with the canoe. She was so unnerved by the fright that just as she was stepping into the frail little craft she fainted and upset the canoe, tipping herself and the children into the water. Happily three or four Indians who were helping in the escape rescued them and once more safely in the canoe they crossed the river and took up their abode in the camp with Peguis' family.

The day following the North-West Company people took the fort without further loss of life. The prisoners and a certain number of colonists were embarked in canoes and sent to York* in Upper Canada.

Madame Lajimoniere passed the summer in the lodge of the Indians, sharing their food which consisted chiefly of what fish they could catch. As long as the warm weather lasted she did not suffer as she was accustomed to a camp life, but when the first frost came she had to think of leaving Peguis' tent for some warmer abode.

On the east side of the river opposite Fort Gibraltar an old Canadian named Bellehumeur had built a wooden hut. This was not a castle by any means, but it would be warmer

* Jack Fish River.—*Ed.*

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than the tent. The house was not occupied, tenants being scarce about that time, so in October Madame Lajimoniere took possession of this shelter for her family for the winter. Her husband had now been absent almost a year and as she had no news of him she believed that he must have perished on the road, she feared that he had been killed by the Indians or had fallen a victim to exhaustion and hunger.

This was a very dark and sorrowful autumn for her. The scene of the 19th of June had alarmed the whole country. Every one expected terrible reprisals. Everywhere they suffered from a like state of affairs, no one knew when the news of fresh struggles would reach them. Many a time Madame Lajimoniere sitting in her cabin in the long autumn evenings shed tears while thinking of her situation. If her husband never returned what means of subsistence was left to her? The greater part of the colonists abandoned Red River to return to Canada. Her only consolation in her loneliness was prayer to which she had constant resource. Towards Christmas, three months after taking possession of Bellehumeur's hut, she was surprised to see a voyageur arrive one evening and when she recognized her husband in him her joy was great. For a moment she forgot all her miseries and trials. M. Lajimoniere arrived safe and sound after fourteen months of absence ! Day by day he related to his wife the events of his long journey, his imprisonment at Fort William and his delivery on the arrival of the De Meuron Force which ought not to be long in reaching Red River to retake the Colony's Fort, now occupied by the agents of the North-West Company.

The De Meuron Force, guided by Indians, and conducted by Captain d'Orsonnens, did not however arrive until February. The route which they followed was that of Red Lake. Then entered the Red River above Pembina and from there dircted their march a little to the west of the river and camped on the Assiniboine about four or five miles from the mouth of that river where the Church of St. James now stands. They remained in this place for some time making ladders to scale the palisades of Fort Douglas, and waiting for a favorable moment to make the attack which was not long in presenting itself.

Favored by a snow storm they approached the Fort without being seen. The sentinels had not time to give the alarm. In a few moments the soldiers had gained the interior of the

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Fort and all whom they found there were made prisoners.

A week later Madame Lajimoniere found herself lodged anew in the house that she had been obliged to abandon on the 19th of June after the battle with the Metis. Her fate seemed to be ameliorating, for the rest of the winter all her wants were supplied and the forts protected by soldiers no longer dreaded an attack by enemies.

In the spring as M. Lajimoniere was obliged to return to the chase the Fort filled with military men seemed hardly a proper place for a woman living alone, so she asked the trader if he would kindly give her a large tent which she could pitch at some distance and retire to it with her little ones. Her request was willingly granted and she remained during the summer under canvas in the neighborhood.

Lord Selkirk spent the summer in regulating the affairs of his colony. He restored Fort Gibraltar to the North-West Trading Company who rebuilt it; granted lands to the military whom he had brought to Red River; concluded a treaty with the Indians, and in October left for England.

M. Lajimoniere with some others conducted him almost to the American territories, returning to Fort Douglas in November.

Lord Selkirk recompensed M. Lajimoniere for his devotion to the Company in undertaking the long journey to Montreal by giving him the land on the bank of the Red River opposite Point Douglas. It was a part of this land that one of his sons sold in 1882 for the large sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

After his return from accompanying Lord Selkirk M. Lajinmoniere made preparations for building a living place for his family on his own land. The season was too far advanced to think of building a wooden house so he dug a hole in the ground over which he put a kind of thatch roof and installed his family there for the winter of 1817-18.

The reader will see that since 1806 there had not been any great amelioration in comfort as far as lodging was concerned. The camps at Pembina, the tents on the prairies of the Saskatchewan, the hut on the Assiniboine, Bellehumeur's house, none of these were improved very much by the quarters which she occupied through the winter of 1817-18. However, obliged to live in this poor retreat which more resembled a vault than the dwelling of a human being this woman had one hope in which her heart rejoiced.

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Lord Selkirk before his departure had made the Catholic colony on the Red River sign a petition asking the Bishop of Quebec to send missionaries to evangelize the country. He presented this petition himself and employed all his influence to have it granted.

Though a Protestant Lord Selkirk knew that to found a permanent colony on the Red River he required the encouragement of religion. Should his application succeed the missionaries would come with the voyageurs in the following spring and would arrive in Red River towards the month of July. This thought alone made Madame Lajimoniere forget her eleven years of loneliness and sorrow. How happy she would be to see the priests again! to go to confession and to receive the Sacrement. She would see her children baptised and instructed in their religion. What joy for her after having been deprived of the sacred services for so long a time to be able to take part in religious service. These consoling thoughts brightened the darkness of her cave-like dwelling.

Through the winter M. Lajimoniere turned his thoughts towards a home for his family and his wife had hope of soon seeing herself more commodiously lodged. He cut the logs for the house and made every preparation that he possibly could for its construction that they might be in proper order to receive the missionaries who would not fail to visit them. When the pleasant spring weather came Madame Lajimoniere left her underground lodgings for the tent until her house was ready.

She and her children dug up a small corner of the ground where she intended to plant some corn. This spring all the new colonists had sown little fields which were not slow in promising a good harvest.

Before July the news had spread that the missionaries were coming that very summer, but as yet the exact date of their arrival was not known. Telegraphs had not reached this region and moreover the voyageurs were often exposed to delays.

After waiting patiently, one beautiful morning on the 16th of July, the day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a man came from the foot of the river to warn Fort Douglas and the neighborhood that two canoes bringing the missionaries were coming up the river, and that all the people ought to be at the Fort to receive them on their arrival.

Scarcely was the news made known when men, women and children hurried to the Fort. Those who had never seen

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the priests were anxious to contemplate these men of God of whom they had heard so much. Madame Lajimoniere was not the last to hasten to the place where the missionaries would land. She took all her little ones with her, the eldest of whom was Reine, then eleven years old.

Towards the hour of noon on a beautiful clear day more than one hundred and fifty persons were gathered on the river bank in front of Fort Douglas. Every eye was on the turn of the river at the point. It was who should first see the voyageurs. Suddenly two canoes bearing the Company's flag came in sight. There was a general shout of joy. The trader of the Fort, Mr. A. McDonald, was a Catholic, and he had everything prepared to give them a solemn reception. Many called to the old Canadians who had left their homes many shed tears of joy. The memory of their native land was reyears before. These old voyageurs who had been constantly called upon to face death had been deprived of all religious succour during the long years but they had not been held by a spirit of impiety. The missionaries were to them the messengers of God.

The canoes landed in front of Fort Douglas, M. Provencher and his companion both invested in their cassocks stepped on shore and were welcomed with outstretched hands by this family, which was henceforth to be theirs.

They were admired for their manly figures as much as for the novelty of their costumes. M. Provencher and his companion, M. Severe Dumoulin, were both men of great stature and both had a majestic carriage. They stood at the top of the bank and after making the women and children sit down around them M. Provencher addressed some words to this multitude gathered about him. He spoke very simply and in a fatherly manner. Madame Lajimoniere who had not listened to the voice of a priest for twelve years could hardly contain herself for joy. She cried with happiness and forgetting all her hardships, fancied herself for a moment in the dear parish of Maskinongé where she had spent such happy peaceful years.

The missionaries arrived on Thursday, July 16th. M. Provencher having made known to his new family the aim of his mission wished immediately to begin teaching them the lessons of Christianity and to bring into the fold the sheep which were outside.

While waiting till a house could be built for the missionaries, M. Provencher and his companion were hospitably en-

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tertained at the Fort of the Colony. A large room in one of the buildings of the Fort had been set apart for them, and it was there that they held divine service. M. Provencher invited all the mothers of families to bring their children who were under six years of age to the Fort on the following Saturday when they would receive the happiness of being baptised. All persons above that age who were not Christians could not receive that sacrament until after being instructed in the truths of Christianity.

When M. Provencher had finished speaking the Governor conducted him with M. Dumoulin into the Fort. Canadians, Metis and Indians feeling very happy retired to return three days afterwards.

There were four children in the Lajimoniere family, but only two of them could be baptised, the others being nine and eleven years of age. On the following Saturday Madame Lajimoniere with all the other women came to the Fort. The number of children, including Indians and Metis, amounted to a hundred and Madame Lajimoniere being the only Christian woman stood Godmother to them all. For a long time all the children in the colony called her " Marraine."

M. Provencher announced that from the next day the missionaries would begin their work and that the settlers ought to begin at the same time to work at the erection of a home for them.

M. Lajimoniere was one of the first to meet at the place selected and to commence preparing the materials for the building. The work progressed so rapidly that the house was ready for occupation by the end of October.

Madame Lajimoniere rendered every assistance in her power to the missionaries.

The settlers in the colony were very poor, they had no bread, nor had they any milk, most of the cows brought into the country by the North-West Trading Company were dead and there only remained four in all. The year that the missionaries arrived M. Lajimoniere had been fortunate enough to obtain one of these.

In the month of November M. Provencher left the Fort to take up his quarters in his new dwelling and after service he often took a walk on the banks of the River Seine and usually stopped at Madame Lajimoniere's house where there was always a glass of good milk reserved for the Missionary which she offered to him with a good heart.

During the years 1819 and 1820 those who lived in the colony were almost reduced to extremity. Madame Lajimoniere

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who well knew the self-sacrificing nature of M. Provencher sent to the Mission, whenever she could, a little bag of meat by the children.

M. Provencher recognized the devotion of this woman and when he had nothing to eat at home, which was very often, he would say to the eldest of Madame Lajimoniere's children as she was going home after her lessons, "Listen, my child, tell your mother that I have nothing at all to eat this evening." The child would hasten with the message and very soon return through the woods carrying a small parcel of dried meat for the good Fathers.

The years 1819 to 1823 were years of want and suffering in the settlement. Up to the time when the missionaries arrived in the country there was not any bread in the place even on the table of the Governor of the Company, but they always hoped to have some soon. They had sown their fields and the grain had a very good appearance. Madame Lajimoniere, who for twelve years had been accustomed to do without bread, living only on meat dried by the sun, looked forward with pleasure to the little piece of land which her husband had planted near the house and from which she was to obtain this luxury.

One does not easily lose the taste for bread even though deprived of it for some time, and its value was increased in her eyes by the fact that she looked upon it as a souvenir of her native land. Unfortunately a devastating plague came and in a few hours destroyed the hope of the colony. On the 3rd of August, 1818, a cloud of grasshoppers descended and covered the land, devouring the whole crop. They deposited their eggs in the earth and the next spring these produced a swarm of small grasshoppers not much larger than fleas, which ruined all vegetation. In July, 1819, having become fully developed they rose in the air like a cloud and disappeared so of course there was no harvest at all that year.

In 1820 every one confident of success sowed their land and the grain came up beautifully, but on the 26th of July a swarm of grasshoppers as great as in 1819 once more descended creating the same havoc, they deposited their eggs as before so that in the spring of 1821 the small grasshoppers coming out of the ground spoiled all hope of a crop. The country was only delivered from them in August. During four years neither grain nor root had been reaped.

In the spring of 1822 the settlers used up the last of their seed grain and counted on a good harvest, but mice in great numbers came to ravage the fields and caused as much dam-

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age as the grasshopppers had done. After this plague no more seed grain remained in the country so it was necessary to send for some to Dog Plain on the Mississippi. To complete their misfortunes it arrived too late to be sown in 1823 so they were fated to be without a harvest this year again.

All this time the settlers were obliged to live from the products of the chase and by fishing. Most of them passed the winter at Pembina because provisions were more easily procured there than at St. Boniface. However, in spite of the privations which she had to support through these years of want, Madame Lajimoniere did not again follow her husband to the plains but remained in her house on the banks of the Red River near the mouth of the Seine.

In 1844 the Sisters of Charity arrived from Montreal in Red River and Madame Lajimoniere regarded the visit of these good women as the greatest honour.

The harvests in 1824 and 1825 were very abundant and raised the spirits of the Colony, but Providence had still another trial in store for it before it was permitted to be developed. The winter of 1825-26 was more severe than any that had been experienced in the country. The snow commenced to fall heavily by the 15th of October and it continued steadily and extremely cold throughout the whole season.

In the spring the large amount of snow which had fallen and remained on the ground produced a tremendous quantity of water. The river rose thirty feet above the ordinary level. Two or three leagues of country disappeared on either side of the river under this new deluge. All the houses of the inhabitants were carried away by the breaking up of the ice and by the violence of the water, which gradually rose from the end of April till about the 20th of May only returning to its ordinary course by the 10th of June.

All the settlers had to take refuge on a hill about six miles west of Winnipeg. M. Lajimoniere and his family being on the east side of the river could only reach a rising piece of land where they camped having taken with them a small amount of provisions. There, as on an island in the middle of an ocean, without help from any side they had to wait for the end of the flood. More than once Madame Lajimoniere believed that nothing could save them and that they would all perish of hunger.

On the 20th of May the water ceased to rise and two or three days afterwards commenced to abate. At last by the 10th of June the river once more returned to its natural bed but it was too late to think of planting a crop. So the hope of a harvest was renounced until the next year.

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A party of settlers left the country, some returning to Canada and others going to the United States, and Madame Lajimoinere had the grief of seeing one of her daughters who had married a Canadian named Lamere, depart with him for the United States.

Through all her loneliness and trials she had entertained the hope that some day she would be able to return to Canada to see her own people. When she had come to Red River it was not with the intention of always residing there. Her husband had not thus represented it to her when she consented to follow him in 1807. But little by little she was disallusioned on this point. Her husband was quite decided not to abandon his hunting life. She was beginning to be resigned to her fate and her only desire now was to keep her children near her.

It was a very sorrowful time for Madame Lajimoniere when after the scourge of 1826 her eldest daughter Madame Lamere* left for the United States. She tried once more on this occasion to plead with her husband to return to Canada following the example of others who had renounced the effort of establishing themselves in a land so full of trials. But it was in vain, M. Lajimoniere was determined never to leave Red River.

Encouraged by the Missionaries who in spite of their trials persisted in dwelling in this place and who commenced once more the work which had been destroyed by the inundation, M. Lajimoniere rebuilt his little home at the mouth of the River Seine.

In due time the other children grew up and married in the country establishing themselves on the land about St. Boniface. Both of the boys inherited from their father the taste for a life of travel and adventure.

After the flood of 1826 Madame Lajimoniere did not leave her home, but brought up her family to be good and honest men and women. As to their father he retained, all his life, the habits of a hunter. When Madame Lajimoniere became a widow in 1850 she left her house on the Red River to live with her son Benjamin, two miles from St. Boniface and it was at his house that her life was ended at the advanced age of 96 years, surrounded by all the consolations that religion can offer. She died without ever hearing of her relations whom she had left in Canada.

*NOTE—Madam Lamere after spending 26 years in the United States came back to St. Boniface where she had the happiness of seeing her old mother, then 90 years of age.

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